

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence, City Hall

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

October 11, 2011

Open Session

Mr. Tsonos, Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

Members present: Luisa Abatecola, Stephen Furtado, Ryan Tellier, Chrissy Rossi and Charles Tsonos. Also present: Mr. Edward M. Daft, Interim Superintendent, Robert Silva, Esq. and Andrew Thomas, Esq.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Moment of Silence were observed.

Student Liaison – Andrew Butler presented a report on high school activities and events.

Motion was made by Mrs. Abatecola to move to agenda item H.11 Waiver of Building Use Fees, AYSO Competition Cheer Squad , EP Jr. Townies Cheerleading, and St. Martha's Basketball seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

Mrs. Rossi explained that since the passage of the revised Facilities

Use policy, there have been problems with the fees charged to various groups who use the facilities. Mrs. Rossi, through a motion, asked to waive the fees for this season and requested that at least one person from each executive board get together to determine what is affordable or if community members may be able to help out; groups are using our facilities and the school budget cannot support that. Motion seconded by Mr. Tellier. Mr. Tsonos noted that only a few organizations are listed and this should apply to all organizations to include St. Margaret's and St Brendan's.

Revisit Building Use Policy Fee Schedule - A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to revisit the policy, since these are youth-oriented programs and the fees to use the facilities are too high for them to pay. Discussion if this would be for all non-profits and East Providence based organizations. Mr. Daft asked that this include all building use except the auditorium since we generate money from renting it out which is used for upgrades of the auditorium and some of the organizations who use it charge admission. Mr. Tsonos noted that at this time the only exception should be use of the auditorium.

Karen Doucette of AYSO stated that the AYSO organization, a non-profit for over 20 years, is dependent on using school gyms for instruction and that the new school policy affects over 500 players; she was concerned about the financial constraints imposed on organizations like AYSO, which would be devastating to the youth of East Providence; she requested that the School Committee waive fees on behalf of all non-profit organizations.

Missy Andrade, a parent, spoke about the after-school enrichment programs at Silver Spring sponsored by the Parent Teacher group and that businesses have been coming in year after year for the students; if they had to charge fees to pay for the building use, the program would be non-existent; she asked that the non-profit status include Parent Groups. She hoped the School Committee would address this. Mr. Furtado agreed that parent groups should not be charged fees to use facilities.

Mr. Feola, High School Facilities Manager, asked for clarification of the policy since other schools like Bay View Academy rent the pool and fees collected are used for upkeep of the pool; his concern was that they are a non-profit in East Providence.

Mr. Tsonos noted there could be certain exceptions; the pool fees cannot be waived. The motion was repeated to waive fees for East Providence-based-non-profits except for specific locations, such as the auditorium and the pool, all voted aye.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to move to Item I4 Revisit Building Use Policy Fee Schedule and refer it to the policy subcommittee to revisit the policy, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Mr. Tellier would like to meet with the executive boards of the organizations first to have input into the discussion and asked groups to please email possible dates to Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Mr. Tsonos requested that anyone who wishes to have input should contact Mrs. Rossi and Mr. Tellier.

Public Comment I - None

Student Recognition – DECA – Presentation was made by members of the DECA group regarding their membership drive.

Report: Interim Superintendent's Report

Mr. Daft reported that East Providence was recently recognized for great improvement on the NECAP Science Scores. East Providence High School Principal, Janet Sheehan, and Science Department Chair, Kim Laliberte, distributed state score reports for the High School which indicated that 85% of last year's students met the requirement and that all students were moving along, which is a testament to teachers who have been working in collaborative teams and making changes professionally that have directly impacted students.

Update on Teacher Evaluation Progress – Mr. Daft explained that this is the first year East Providence will have Master Mentor Evaluators. Sandra Forand and Kim Laliberte (MME) were present to speak about the process. Ms. Laliberte attended training at RI Department of Education over the summer which ensures that all evaluators will be using the same protocol. East Providence is beginning to roll out the process with teachers and evaluators and training with principals. All teachers and administrators will be evaluated; the MME's have spent time in every school; there are self- assessments for professional growth which require teachers and administrators to look at themselves and develop goals. Both she and Ms. Forand are working on building wide goals, which should have continuity in the district, with 50% focused on student learning objectives.

Discussion: Mrs. Rossi asked about when the entire process will be in place, how it has been received, and if there have been any problems. Ms. Laliberte explained that the process will take about one year and we are now about half way there. The role of the Master Mentor Evaluators is to support the process and equity in all buildings; the process is intended to be supportive and they meet with teachers to provide that support. Ms. Forand believes we are ahead of the curve in the state and network with other districts to share information with them. Ms. Laliberte explained their job is to support teachers throughout the year. Ms. Forand stated that the East Providence model has been looked at by the state and our MME's have trained others. Ms. Forand asked that teachers be patient as the district works through the process, the purpose of which is to improve teaching and learning.

Finance Report – Mary King, Finance Director presented a report through 9/30/11. Revenue is on track and funds from the state will be received on October 31st. On the expenditure side, there will be a deficit situation; \$1.6 will include \$700,000 for deficit reduction; the city will not let us use that money; deficit will be \$900,000 to \$1 Million at the end of FY 11.

Personnel Report on Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence – Mary King presented the personnel items:

RESIGNATION

Cynthia Steger School Nurse – RMS Effective 09/23/2011

**Bridget Garrity Basketball/Competitive Cheer Coach-
EPHS Effective 09/20/2011**

Personal Leave of Absence

**Tabitha Watjen Special Education Teacher-EPHS - Effective
09/29/2011-End of School Year**

**Consent Agenda - Approval of Minutes – A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to approve the minutes of the meetings held on September 13, 2011 and September 27, 2011, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola.
Vote 5-0.**

Action Items

Personnel Appointments/Recalls: Mary King presented the personnel items:

Appointments

**Susan Abdow 3/5 School Nurse/Teacher Private Schools - Effective
10/06/2011**

**Rachael Cassidy School Nurse/Teacher - RMS (1yr) - Effective
10/06/2011**

**Michael Jones 2/5 Physics Teacher – EPHS Effective
10/04/2011**

Melissa O’Neil RTI Specialist – Oldham Elementary

Jennifer Preiss RTI Specialist – Riverside Middle School
Tamara Sexton 1:1 School Nurse/Teacher-WADD Effective TBD
Motion to approve by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Tellier.

Discussion regarding nurses; Mr. Daft explained that the School Department is mandated to provide private school nurse coverage. Ms. Diana Clarkin, Operations Manager, explained that elementary nurses have specific responsibilities in the schools, such as records, but was not sure what the procedure is for administering medications; she will follow up and get information. Vote 5-0.

Requisitions – Bill List

Warrant #1142 10/6/11 \$ 174,480.73

Warrant #1143 10/6/11 \$ 567,307.74

Motion to approve by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

FY12 Budget Second Passage – Motion to approve by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Tellier.

Discussion: Mr. Furtado noted a report about the tax levy last year of \$95 million; the School Department receives \$44 million which is well below the state-wide average. Schools have 60% more personnel than other city departments and the department has been underfunded for years. The School Committee has to go forward with a budget even though there are nowhere near the cuts needed.

Mr. Tsonos agreed that the School Department has been historically underfunded and will pursue every avenue beyond the city to seek funds for our schools in order to fulfill obligations to both taxpayers and vendors. Vote 5-0.

Request(s) for Home Schooling – Motion by Mrs. Rossi to approve requests recommended by Interim Superintendent Daft, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

TANS/ Deficit Reduction Bond - Mr. Tellier stated that the biggest concern is about the cash flow issue; he voted to send a resolution to the City Council to request Tax Anticipated Notes (TANS), seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Mrs. Rossi agreed with Mr. Tellier that unless we solve the cash flow problem, things will never get any better; she has looked everywhere for money and it there is none.

Discussion regarding TANS and GANS for deficit reduction. Mary King, Finance Director stated that during a discussion with the bond person, Steve Maceroni, he indicated at the time that because of the state of the state, there is no market for GANS; we cannot sell general obligation bonds; TANS was the only option; a debt reduction bond needs to go to General Assembly in January. Mr. Tellier confirmed that TANS are short term where a debt reduction bond would be long term. The final vote was Vote 5-0 in favor of sending the resolution.

Mr. Tellier asked to send a Resolution to the General Assembly for a debt reduction bond in order to get that rolling for next year. Mr. Furtado seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.

Remainder of bonds to be sold in order to complete Phase II of School Construction - Mr. Tellier asked to send a resolution to the City Council to begin the process to sell bonds in order to complete Phase II of the school construction, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola.

Discussion: Mrs. Rossi asked if a letter had been received from RIDE about reimbursement issues. Mary King reported that she spoke to RIDE officials and the letter is expected sometime next week along with a letter from the Fire Department; we will not be eligible for state aide if the entire project is not completed, including the work RI Department of Health is expecting to be completed. Mrs. Rossi requested that copies of the letters be forwarded to School Committee as soon as they arrive. Vote 5-0 on motion.

Resolution on Relief from Proposed Pension Reform - Mrs. Rossi agrees with trying to plow ahead with pension reform; this issue is crippling school districts. Discussion:

Mary King stated that for FY 1, an additional \$1 and half million dollars will be needed; FY 13 add \$2 million; this will add to the deficit already projected if no reforms are made; the General Treasurer indicated there are other options which would not place the burden on local taxes. Ms. King advised that the numbers will keep

going up without reform and that the School Committee could show their concerns to the General Treasurer. Mr. Silva will work on this with Mary King. Mr. Furtado suggested that RI Association of School Committees also works on resolutions for all the School Committees in order to show a unified effort. Mr. Tsonos will follow up with legal counsel and RIASC in addition to reaching out to the General Assembly.

Affirmative Action MOA - Mr. Furtado announced that Mr. Pina of the City's Affirmative Action Office would be willing to act as Affirmative Action Officer for the School Department and could meet with the policy subcommittee to adjust the Affirmative Action policy. Motion by Mr. Furtado to approve, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Discussion: Mrs. Rossi agreed it was an excellent idea, welcomed working with Mr. Pina and believed he would do a great job for the School Department at no additional cost. Vote 5-0.

Advertising Approval - Motion by Mrs. Rossi to approve a request from the Children's Workshop to advertise on the district website, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola; this is the first request to advertise on our website. Vote 5-0. Congratulations to Mrs. Rossi by Mr. Tellier.

EPLAC Membership List – A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to approve the list as presented, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0

Old Business

Bradley Partnership and Groden Center Update - Mr. Tsonos related that meetings were held with Bradley and Groden with plans for a second meeting on Thursday morning; the discussion has been positive and he was happy to report that we are moving forward in a positive direction to address our debt. Mrs. Rossi asked who the bargaining agent was for the School Department. Mr. Tsonos explained that the CEO of both Bradley and the Groden Center requested a meeting to discuss goals and concerns and something needed to be done immediately. Mr. Daft, Ms. King, Ms. Ursillo and Ms. Clarkin were all present to exchange information and to understand where we are, but nothing was locked in. The School Committee will discuss this matter further in executive session.

Mr. Tsonos added that city officials are invited to all meetings and the organizations want them to be present; it was promised that someone from the city would attend the next meeting; we have assured them we intend to pay our bills.

Deficit Reduction/Elimination - Mrs. Rossi stated that she could not let the opportunity go by without commenting that the city stuck us with a Deficit Reduction Committee and said the debt was both the city's and school's debt. The city took the funding formula money and she was not happy with the plan we are stuck with now; we could have done better. Mr. Tellier agreed; the School Department reorganized, consolidated, and did everything that was asked, but schools have mandates; the city needs to come up with a little bit

more help.

Status of Performance Audit - Mr. Tsonos announced that the city will be meeting with the Auditor General next Thursday to discuss a plan submitted by the city which he believes they are not happy with; we will meet with them and move forward from there. Mr. Silva reviewed the RFP for the audit but has not been responsible for anything from that point on; he thought it could be invalid to go forward. Mr. Silva stated that the RFP is more than adequate to bring about appropriate responses and to go with the RFP. Mr. Daft thought the Auditor General may request an audit. Mr. Tellier said the city requested it and would pay for it. Discussion took place; it was decided to send it to the city and move it forward.

Nicole Estrella, Orlo Avenue School, thanked the School Committee and Mr. Catelli for working together with Orlo on their playground project; she would be happy to hear any suggestions; she met with Mr. Tsonos to assess the grounds; they will work on a smaller playground first, then fundraise for the back of the school. Mr. Tsonos asked for community support on the project.

Public Comment II

Mr. Anthony Ferrera spoke regarding the passage of the budget with a \$7 million deficit, which would be approximately a 7% tax increase.

Mr. Furtado spoke about the amount of money allocated to the

schools by the city which was 44% of the city budget; all bargaining units have taken pay cuts and are paying 20% co-pays for health insurance; additional funds are needed for the schools.

Mr. Ferrera asked what would happen if the budget is not approved; the city is discussing closing libraries with an estimated \$3 million in debt, so the total would be \$10 million dollars; the only avenue will be from the taxpayers; he asked what the alternative is since the city does not have the funds. Every year the taxpayers are asked to pay more while the elected officials play the blame game; meetings have been held for six or seven months and we are no further along; nothing has been accomplished in six months. There should be a list of items for the public to see from the city and the schools; this is how business works and this is how all could help solve the problem.

Politics should be put aside for the students who need a good education; we have to eliminate the bickering and fix it so students and businesses want to stay here. The budget has to be passed in two weeks and the money has to come from taxes. The meals tax was 50/50 when implemented; going forward need to look at these issues; this will force the elderly to move; the city is in front of the public hashing it out ; where do we go if city does not give the schools that money and we will be short. Everyone knew about the hole and thought the taxpayers would come up with \$8-9 million dollars.

Mr. Furtado stated that we need to also address the federal

government and state mandates which the taxpayers cannot afford.

Diana Clarkin, Operations Manager, clarified the question regarding nurses; the state requires the city to provide private school nurses; they do not give meds to students but are used more for recording of immunizations; there is no reimbursement for this service.

Joe Grace, a resident of East Providence, agreed with predecessors; we forget about the money private schools save the city, since we would have to educate those kids otherwise. When we look at books, saving money, TANS, bond rating plummets; we were warned not to go with TANS, but keep bringing it up again; we need bonds for construction of \$15 million but no one will allow us to borrow; it will cost a fortune; another \$7 million increase in the budget; he cannot afford another tax increase. 93% of the budget is contractual and even though there was a 5% pay cut, there are still step increases; this was unsustainable; the School Committee told us they were short; the 5% should not have been given out; he would like to help with the budget.

Announcements - Mrs. Rossi announced the Winter Fest sponsored by the Senior Center.

Mr. Daft announced the Townie Pride Parade plans.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado that the Committee convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I. Gen.

Laws §42-46-5(a) (1), Collective Bargaining R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2) and Litigation/Pending Litigation -R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a)(2, seconded by Mr. Tellier.

Vote 5-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to return to Public Session and to seal the minutes of the Executive Session, seconded by Mrs. Rossi.

Vote 5-0.

Report Executive Session Votes – No votes were taken.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to adjourn at 9:43PM, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee